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LATIN AMERICAN REACTIONS TO DEVELOPMENTS IN AND WITH RESPECT TO CUBA

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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on 18 July 1961. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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LATIN AMERICAN REACTIONS TO DEVELOPMENTS IN AND WITH RESPECT TO CUBA

THE PROBLEM

To analyze the reactions in other Latin American countries to developments in and with respect to Cuba, and to estimate the effect of the continuing revolution in Cuba on the situation in those countries over the next several years.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba and Castro's actual initiation of sweeping reforms had a profound psychological impact throughout Latin America. However, Castro's efforts to assume revolutionary leadership in other countries, the totalitarian character of his regime, and his dependence on the Soviet Bloc have antagonized many of those who were initially well disposed toward him. Nevertheless, the Communist movement in Latin America has been revitalized by the Communist success in Cuba, the indigenous Cuban example, and the Bloc support now available through Cuba. Thus, although the initial impact of the Cuban revolution has been blunted to some extent, the Castro/Communist potential inherent in the social dissatisfaction pervading Latin America remains. (Paras. 11-23, 34)

2. The traditional elite is for the most part determined to maintain things as they were, but power is slipping from its hands.

The growing middle class and organized labor have already acquired considerable political strength. In several countries, such as Venezuela and Argentina, these elements have come to power and have begun to institute reform. In most of Latin America the military, often identified in the past with the maintenance of the economic and social *status quo*, has now recognized the need for reforms within the constitutional framework. With a long tradition of anticommunism and of friendship with the US, the military remains one of the strongest bulwarks against the spread of Castroism and communism and is becoming a supporter of reformist governments. (Paras. 13-15)

3. Latin American governments basically disapprove of the way things are going in Cuba, but for differing reasons have been reluctant to endorse strong measures against Castro. Although there has been widespread criticism of Castro in the press, politicians and governments have

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often been reluctant to engage the well organized local pro-Castro elements for fear of provoking demonstrations and riots. Therefore the opposition of governments to Castro generally has been muted, except in those cases where Castro elements presented an immediate challenge to local leadership. (Paras. 25-27)

4. The chief political effect of Castro's ability to defeat a US effort to unseat him in April was to increase his regime's standing as a going concern, not only with his Latin American adherents, but with his adversaries as well. The Communists have been much heartened by Castro's success and by the US predicament and loss of prestige. While Latin American governments and other elements basically opposed to Castro are now generally more conscious of the Castro regime as a serious problem, they are also more conscious of it as something they will probably have to live with for some time. (Paras. 28-30)

5. In the absence of new provocations by Castro, the prospects for hemisphere action against his regime will remain poor.

6. With respect to the revolutionary appeal of Castrolism, the battle lines between the various forces in the area are by now fairly well drawn. Moderate and conservative elements are still dominant in most countries, and the military remains almost universally a main element of power. Although political consciousness and restiveness among the depressed classes will continue to grow, it appears unlikely that there will be any dramatic upsurge of popular pro-Castro sentiment in most countries in the next year. (Para. 32)

7. For the short run, Castro will seek to avoid actions which might provoke collective measures against him by the Inter-American community. He almost certainly will refrain from efforts to export the revolution by military means. His efforts to promote revolution in Latin America will probably be confined to propaganda and clandestine activities, including what material support he feels he can give unobtrusively to revolutionaries in the other countries. (Para. 33)

8. Although the odds are against the actual seizure of power in other Latin American countries by pro-Castro elements in the next six months to a year, there are a number of countries in which the situation is unstable and pro-Castro elements might come to power, notably El Salvador, Honduras, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The downfall of the present authoritarian regimes in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Paraguay would provide an opportunity for pro-Castro elements, despite their apparent lack of strength in these countries. (Paras. 35-36)

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9. If Castro succeeds in consolidating his regime, the importance of his influence and example will grow. As the Cuban regime becomes more firmly entrenched and more widely accepted in the hemisphere as a going concern, Castro and the Communists will step up their propaganda and agitation in other Latin countries. On the other hand, even if Castro were to be overthrown by elements which would pursue the original aims of the Cuban revolution, Castroism would continue to have a psychological impact on Latin America. (Paras. 31, 39-40)

10. The danger lies in the conjuncture of a subversive apparatus centered in Cuba which is seeking to export revolution with the increasing discontent among the Latin American lower classes. In many countries the old-line leadership is still firmly resisting reform. In [redacted] countries where the government is attempting to introduce social and economic change, there is a danger that the authorities may continue to move too slowly and ineffectually to satisfy the popular aspirations they have helped generate. (Para. 40)

(b)(1)
(b)(7)

DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

11. Castro's Cuba has become to much of the Latin American community a living example of the radical breakup of traditional social and economic patterns. For many of those who seek to upset the *status quo* in their own countries Havana has developed into the mecca of revolutionary inspiration and conspiracy. To conservatives the example of the Cuban regime is not only repugnant, but frightening. But the extensive influence of "Castroism" is not a function of Cuban power. Castro's shadow looms large because social and economic conditions throughout Latin America invite opposition to ruling authority and encourage agitation for radical change.

The Changing Scene in Latin America

12. *Economic and Social Conditions.* Latin America is now in a state of transition. The 19th century pattern of relationships and attitudes which still prevails through most of the area is being progressively undermined by a host of economic, social, and political changes, whose pace has accelerated in the period since World War II. Economic growth over the last decade or two has been rapid, but uneven. It has exaggerated the disparities between the traditionally important agri-

cultural and extractive sectors of the economy, which function much as they did in the past, and the modern industrial developments associated with the cities. The influx into the urban communities of unskilled peasants in search of employment has produced a mass of city slums occupied by the unemployed and the underemployed. Such people are arriving faster than the city can accommodate them. The benefits of the present rate of modern development—itsself insufficient to keep up with Latin America's rapid population growth—are still confined mainly to the upper and middle classes and skilled labor.

13. *Political Changes.* The traditional elite is for the most part determined to maintain things as they were, but power is slipping from its hands. The growing middle class and organized labor have already acquired considerable political strength, and the rise in their demands for economic and social progress is an increasingly important factor to be reckoned with. In several countries, such as Venezuela and Argentina, these elements have come to power and have begun to institute reform. In most of Latin America the military, often identified in the past with the maintenance of the economic and social *status quo*, has now recognized the need for reforms

within the constitutional framework. With a long tradition of anticommunism and of friendship with the US, the military remains one of the strongest bulwarks against the spread of Castroism and communism and is becoming a supporter of reformist governments.

14. The demands for extreme change are voiced principally by small groups of radical agitators, intellectuals, and students, not all of whom are Communists. Some are genuinely concerned about the social injustice in their societies. Others are frustrated by their own lack of opportunities for advancement, impatient for change, and more interested in rapid progress than in order. Few of the advocates of extreme change, except members of the Communist cadres, have any experience in the management of affairs or any well-defined plan for what they would put in the place of the old order. The danger of communism derives less from the number of Communists than from the powerful attraction they exercise on dissatisfied elements.

15. The mass support for change as articulated by radical leadership in Latin America comes principally from the urban poor and unskilled workers who have migrated from stagnant rural areas. It is they who form the mobs which demagogic politicians can call out in almost any Latin American city. The underemployed farm laborers and subsistence farmers, who remain on the soil and constitute a majority of Latin Americans, are far from an effective political force, primarily because of their ignorance and apathy. Nevertheless, even the countryside has begun to stir, and popular grievances and aspirations for change are becoming manifest there.

16. *Nationalism.* At least in urban areas, social dissatisfaction in Latin America tends to acquire a strongly nationalist cast, usually with anti-American overtones. In all elements of urban society there is sensitivity regarding national sovereignty and dignity, springing in part from a feeling of inferiority and some resentment of real or imagined US economic and political domination. The presence of so many US-owned and managed business firms represents economic imperial-

ism to many. Sentiment is widespread that both US private enterprise and the US Government are allied by reason of sympathy and economic self-interest with the oligarchy.

17. Even among moderate and conservative elements generally friendly to the US a deep-seated feeling has long existed that the US has taken Latin America for granted. On the one hand, the US is seen as demanding Latin America's support in the UN and the OAS in the name of hemisphere solidarity. On the other hand, the US is viewed as selfishly continuing discriminatory trade and tariff policies, dragging its feet on moves to stabilize international markets and prices for the area's primary products, and giving a low level of economic aid to Latin America. It is also felt that the US, obsessed with the threat of communism, has shown undue favor toward military dictators such as Batista.

Castro/Communist Exploitation of Conditions in Latin America

18. Castro, the Bloc, and Communists throughout the area have expended considerable money and effort to exploit these circumstances, seeking to secure support for Cuba in its differences with the US, and to utilize Cuba as the prototype for revolution in the hemisphere. Moreover, Cuba now provides for the Bloc an effective base of operations and an active executive agency for subversion and propaganda in Latin America. Working with the Castro regime, the Bloc and its supporters are able to give an indigenous aura to Communist agitation and reduce the risk of a hemisphere wide reaction against foreign Communist intervention.

19. Castro initially attempted to export his revolution by supporting exile filibustering expeditions against authoritarian and oligarchic regimes in the Caribbean area. However, these efforts were unsuccessful and since mid-1959 Castro has concentrated on spreading the Cuban revolution among laborers, students, intellectuals, the city mob, leftist parties, and, in certain places, the peasants. He has pursued his objective—in close alliance with international communism—by means of an expansive propaganda campaign and the indoc-

mination, financing, and training of small revolutionary groups. These activities have affected every Latin American country in varying degrees.

20. The Cuban diplomatic corps and a host of roving ambassadors have engaged in sweeping overt and clandestine operations—in defiance of the other governments—to encourage opposition to the established order. Other Castro agents, of both Cuban and foreign nationality, have traveled from Cuba to Latin America for the purpose of organizing student, labor, and revolutionary groups. With the all-out support of the Bloc and local Communist apparatus in the area, Cuba's press agency (*Prensa Latina*), its radio, and its great variety of printed materials have covered the area with pro-Castro propaganda. Small pro-Castro organizations have been activated in most countries. Castro has financed visits to Cuba by large numbers of Latin Americans from every walk of life to impress them with the accomplishments of the revolutionary regime. Many have gone to Cuba to receive training in subversion and guerrilla warfare and returned to their homelands to apply what they have learned. In short, Cuba, in collaboration with the Bloc and with heavy assistance from Communist funds and experience, has set in motion a propaganda and subversive campaign of unprecedented proportions in Latin America.

II. OVERALL REACTIONS TO THE CASTRO REGIME

Among Social, Economic, and Political Groups

21. Given the social dissatisfactions described above, the overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba and Castro's actual initiation of sweeping reforms had a profound psychological impact throughout Latin America. However, Castro's efforts to assume revolutionary leadership in other countries, the totalitarian character of his regime, and his dependence on the Soviet Bloc have antagonized many of those who were initially well disposed toward him. Nevertheless, the Communist movement in Latin America has been revitalized by the Communist success in Cuba, the indige-

nous Cuban example, and the Bloc support now available through Cuba. Thus, although the initial impact of the Cuban revolution has been blunted to some extent, the Castro/Communist potential inherent in the social dissatisfaction pervading Latin America remains.

22. The still powerful traditional institutions in Latin American society—the government bureaucracy, the landlord and banking groups, the press, the military, and the Church—have been repelled by the radical and ruthless nature of the Cuban regime and its interference in the various countries. More importantly, Castro and his supporters in Latin America have thus far failed to capture leadership of the reformist left, which accepted the need for drastic social and economic reform in Cuba and recognizes the need for it elsewhere. Reformists like President Betancourt of Venezuela, Colombian President Lleras, ex-President Figueres of Costa Rica, and the leadership of Peru's APRA party have been disillusioned by Castro's police state methods and by his disruptive influence on the area. Sympathy for Castro has also fallen away within the rank and file of the moderate left. Although a majority of students and many labor elements approve of the original direction of the Cuban revolution, even these groups are growing increasingly resentful of Castro's regimentation of their Cuban counterparts.

23. Cuban inspiration and support has revitalized the Communist movement, pro-Communists and others on the extreme left, but their numerical strength remains small in most countries. Apart from groups long identified with the Communist cause, either as party members or as fellow travelers, Castro has received significant support only within the Socialist parties of Latin America and left-wing minorities or splinters of other reformist parties. Only in northeast Brazil is there a significant radical peasant movement inspired by Cuba's example and influence.

24. Many Latin Americans, mainly in countries distant from Cuba, still consider it a small and remote country whose revolution is of no immediate concern to them. A considerable number of Latins believe that the

Cubans should be allowed to determine their own destiny. Many also consider that Cuba is a problem primarily for the US to handle, and even take some pleasure from the way Castro has stood up to the US. Since most Latin Americans have little concern over the threat of communism in their own countries and since a number of these countries have long had trade and diplomatic ties with the Bloc, they have been slow to recognize the danger to them of communism in Cuba. Moreover, because of the proximity of US military strength, the Cuban military buildup has not been a major concern except in countries near Cuba.

Among the Governments

25. Latin American governments without exception basically disapprove of the way things are going in Cuba. The few remaining dictatorships and some other governments (notably in the Caribbean area) which feel directly threatened by Cuban-encouraged plotting and Cuban-backed agitation have cracked down on local pro-Castro elements and have broken off or suspended diplomatic relations with Havana.¹ Throughout most of Latin America the activities of the Cuban press service have been curtailed or halted.

26. Although there has been widespread criticism of Castro in the press, politicians and governments have often been reluctant to engage the well organized local pro-Castro elements for fear of provoking demonstrations and riots. Therefore the opposition of governments to Castro has generally been muted, except in those cases where Castro elements presented an immediate challenge to local leadership.

III. REPERCUSSIONS OF THE APRIL LANDING IN CUBA

28. Despite Latin America's historic aversion to US intervention and widespread recognition of US involvement in the invasion attempt, pro-Castro elements were generally unsuccessful in their efforts to organize significant demonstrations and riots. Indeed, heretofore passive anti-Castro groups in a number of countries organized anti-Castro demonstrations and in several cases engaged in actual fighting with Communists and other pro-Castro elements. Moreover, the failure of the invasion appears to have had some sobering effects on many who had hoped or assumed that the US would take care of the Cuba problem effectively. This demonstration of Castro's strength dramatized for some the significance of the Bloc military equipment delivered to Cuba. In general, the April landing served to crystallize already existing opinions and differences on the Castro issue.

29. The chief political effect of Castro's ability to defeat a US effort to unseat him was to increase his regime's standing as a going concern, not only with his Latin American adherents, but with his adversaries as well. The Communists have been much heartened by Castro's success and by the US predicament and loss of prestige. They have played on the wide credence given to stories that US support of the Cuban landing was for the purpose of restoring to its American owners property seized by Castro. While Latin American governments and other elements basically op-

¹ Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Peru, and Paraguay.

posed to Castro are now generally more conscious of the Castro regime as a serious problem, they are also more conscious of it as something they will probably have to live with for some time. To many Latin Americans Castro's victory served to point up how Cuba—now closely identified with and heavily dependent on the Bloc—has been able to consolidate its position within the US sphere of influence.

30. The Latin American governments that had broken or suspended relations with Cuba have continued to support the US position; Honduras suspended relations with Cuba shortly after Castro's victory. A number of the other governments have come to believe that the inter-American community probably must do something about Cuba eventually, but they seek to evade the issue at least until definite plans have been laid for an attack on hemisphere economic problems and the US has committed itself to substantial participation.

IV. THE OUTLOOK

31. The Castro regime and the revolutionary approach it exemplifies will continue to exert a strong influence on the process of political, economic, and social change throughout Latin America. Even if Castro were to be overthrown by elements which would pursue the original aims of the Cuban revolution, Castroism would continue to have a psychological impact on Latin America. Nevertheless, Castro's downfall would be a severe blow to international communism in Latin America, as it would demonstrate the inability of the Communists to maintain such a regime.

32. The situation in Latin America is a highly complex one, involving factors which hamper as well as those which promote the rapid spread of Castrotite influences. The battle lines between the various forces in the area are by now fairly well drawn. Despite the revolutionary potential in Latin America, moderate and conservative elements are still dominant in most countries, and the military—in most cases increasingly aware of the need for some accommodation to popular pressures for change—remains almost universally

a main element of power. Although political consciousness and restiveness among the depressed classes to which pro-Castro elements look for support will continue to grow, it appears unlikely that there will be any dramatic upsurge of popular pro-Castro sentiment in most countries in the next year.

33. For the short run, Castro will seek to avoid actions which might provoke collective measures against him by the inter-American community. He almost certainly will refrain from efforts to export the revolution by military means. His efforts to promote revolution in Latin America will probably be confined to propaganda and clandestine activities, including what material support he feels he can give unobtrusively to revolutionaries in the other countries.

34. Whatever restraint Castro may show in the immediate future, the present and potential importance of Castroism in other parts of Latin America should not be underrated. Castro's advent has introduced a new and critical phase in the struggle for power by the forces of the radical left. It has provided them with a concrete example of revolution and a basis for Cuban and increased Communist material and propaganda assistance for their own movements. Despite the minority status of organized pro-Castro elements, their dedication and zeal, together with their recognition of the need to arouse and organize the hitherto politically inert masses at the very bottom of the social scale, could give them a leading role in the political transformations now unfolding in most Latin American countries.

35. The pro-Castro minorities are capable of stirring up sizable demonstrations in a number of countries where the local political situations are unstable. Although the odds are against the actual seizure of power in other Latin American countries by pro-Castro elements in the next six months to a year, there are a number of countries in which the situation is unstable and pro-Castro elements might come to power. Notably El Salvador, Honduras, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The downfall of the present authoritarian regimes in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Paraguay

would provide an opportunity for pro-Castro elements, despite their apparent lack of strength in these countries.

36. While radical elements may not succeed in seizing control of any of these countries immediately after an existing government has given way, they might be able to achieve their objectives in the aftermath when moderate or rightist political forces are in the throes of adjustment. The emergence in any other Latin American country of a regime parallel in orientation to that of Castro in Cuba would tend to stimulate similar developments elsewhere.

37.

39. If Castro succeeds in consolidating his regime, the importance of his influence and example will grow. A Cuba which had succeeded in making a Communist-style revolution would be a compelling example even for those Latin Americans who disliked its methods. In addition, many Latin American governments would probably feel constrained to reach an accommodation with Castro. In the absence of Cuban intervention, which neighboring states regarded as dangerous, the fears of these states with regard to Communist involvement in Cuba and their repugnance for Castro's police state methods probably would wane.

40. Castro and the Communists will almost certainly seek to take advantage of such a situation. As the Cuban regime becomes more firmly entrenched and more widely accepted in the hemisphere as a going concern, they will step up their propaganda and agitation in other Latin countries. However, the danger lies in the conjuncture of a subversive apparatus centered in Cuba which is seeking to export revolution with the increasing discontent among the Latin American lower classes. In many countries the old-line leadership is still firmly resisting reform. (b)(1)

where the government is attempting to introduce social and economic change, there is a danger that the authorities may continue to move too slowly and ineffectually to satisfy the popular aspirations they have helped generate.

41. Outside of the Latin American community in the Caribbean area, a notable opportunity for Castro/Communist penetration exists in British Guiana, which is scheduled to become independent within a few years. There Cheddi Jagan will almost certainly become Chief Minister after the August 1961 election. Jagan has longstanding Communist connections and has actively sought close association with Castro's Cuba.

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